

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-808
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***Operations and Services
Aviation Weather Services, NWSPD 10-8***

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE DESIGNATED PILOT PROGRAM

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: Supersedes National Weather Instruction 10-808, “Designated Pilot Program”, dated October 23, 2002. There is one change, adding “pertaining to civil aircraft” at the end of the first sentence in section 6, General Flight Operations Rules.

SIGNED

11/06/03

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Director, Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services

Date

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1. Purpose. This instruction provides guidelines and requirements for operation of privately owned, leased, or rented aircraft in support of the National Weather Service (NWS) aviation program, its customer liaison responsibilities, and other weather operational support activities.

2. Background. There are instances when operating privately owned, leased, or rented aircraft is the best way to accomplish the NWS's business. These include, but are not limited to, providing familiarization flights for aviation forecasters, participating in storm disaster surveys, responding to immediate requests for delivery of time critical equipment and maintenance support to field offices, providing access for historical building of aerial photography files of flooding events, supporting of pilot weather briefing evaluation activities, and affording another option for NWS personnel to travel to mission and program related activities. Support for these and other events are the responsibility of NWS pilots. Further, NWS pilots support the NWS Aviation Weather Services Program by reporting real-experience weather encounters and providing valuable feedback to aviation forecasters on impacts of weather on aircraft and flying.

3. Definitions. The following definitions apply to this instruction:

- a. Pilot: An individual possessing at least a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Private Pilot Certificate and a Third Class Medical Certificate.
- b. Designated Pilot: A pilot possessing the required FAA certificates and meeting the NWS Pilot Designation and eligibility requirements in Section 5 of this instruction.

- c. Flight Crew: NWS personnel assigned to perform duties involving operation or navigation of an aircraft.
- d. NWS Chief Pilot (NWSCP): A Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) appointed pilot who supervises NWS Headquarters (NWSH) flight operations and pilot designation process.
- e. Supervising Pilot: A NWS designated pilot who supervises NWS regional flight operations and pilot designation process.
- f. Official Passengers: Official passengers on aircraft operated by a NWS designated pilot are from one of the following categories:
 - (1) Employees and officers of the U.S. Government traveling on official business;
 - (2) Members of Congress and congressional committee staffs whose work relates to NWS programs;
 - (3) Passengers with a scientific reason for being on the flight, engaged in activities which enhance accomplishment of a NWS program such as personnel of cooperating state, county, or local agencies or universities.
- g. Non-U.S. Government Passengers: Persons not employed by the U.S. Government, engaged in activities which enhance accomplishment of NWS programs.
- h. Privately Owned Aircraft: Aircraft owned or rented by the designated pilot which is reimbursed on a mileage basis per the NOAA Travel Handbook.
- i. Rental Aircraft: Aircraft hired commercially under an agreement in which the executive agency has exclusive use of the aircraft for an agreed upon period of time. The executive agency operates, but does not maintain, a rental aircraft.
- j. Contract (Leased) Aircraft: Aircraft hired under a commercial contractual agreement in which an executive agency has exclusive use of the aircraft for an agreed upon period of time. The acquiring executive agency operates and maintains the aircraft. Lease aircraft are hired as commercial aviation services aircraft.
- k. Visual Flight Rules (VFR): Rules governing procedures for conducting flight under visual conditions.
- l. Instrument Flight Rules (IFR): Rules governing the procedures for conducting instrument flight.

4. Supervision of Flight Operations. All NWS flight operations are conducted under oversight of the Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services (OCWWS), NWSH. The Director, OCWWS initiates and implements NWS flight operations procedures.

At NWS regional headquarters, the Regional Aviation Meteorologist (RAM), or equivalent in regions not having the position of RAM, implements procedures with the approval of the Director, OCWWS, NWSH. NWS flight operations conducted by personnel assigned to each region will be managed by the region's supervising pilot, who will be designated and authorized by the Regional Director (RD) on recommendation by the RAM or equivalent. All proposed flights will be reviewed by the supervisor of the regional pilot and authorized only if no adverse impacts to office operations exist.

4.1 Designated Pilot Lists. Assignment as a "Designated Pilot" is a collateral duty and is a position held by NWS employees who satisfy the requirements as stated in Section 5.1. The NWSCP, along with supervising pilots, will each maintain a list of designated pilots under their authority. These lists will be validated annually, based on the proficiency requirements in Section 5.4 of this instruction, with copies forwarded to OCWWS and the respective RAM by January 1. Subsequent pilot designation memoranda will be appended to these annual lists.

4.2 Mission Reports Summary. Annual reports will be provided by Designated Pilots to the Regional Supervising Pilot by September 1 each year. The Supervising Pilot will then assimilate and summarize all regional mission reports and provide a final report which will be sent to the RAM by September 15 each year. The RAM will review and then forward the final report to the NWSCP who will package all regional reports and provide to OCWWS, NWSH by October 1 each year. The email address to send the reports to is Chief.Pilot@noaa.gov. The annual summary for the past year will contain:

- a. The total number of missions conducted;
- b. The total number of flight hours;
- c. Type(s) of aircraft flown in missions;
- d. Total costs to the U.S. Government; and
- e. Total of any non-reimbursed costs.
- f. Proposed budget for full support of the regional program for the new fiscal year.

5. Pilot Designation. Any NWS flight operations supporting the operational or tactical objectives of a mission will be conducted only by NWS designated pilots. NWSH pilots will be designated by the DAA, upon recommendation of the NWSCP. Letter of designation will be accomplished with a memorandum to the Director, OCWWS, NWSH, with copies to each designated pilot.

Regional pilots, upon recommendation of their supervising pilot, will be designated by their respective RD. The regional letter of designation will be a memorandum to the RAM, with copies to the designated pilot and to his/her supervisor, the NWSCP, and the Director, OCWWS, NWSH.

5.1 Pilot Eligibility. Only licensed pilots (Airplane Category) holding current medical certificates, meeting FAA and NWS currency and proficiency requirements, and in the employ of the NWS as civil servants, may be NWS Designated Pilots.

5.2 Requests for Pilot Designation. NWS pilot designation requests will be forwarded to the Chief Pilot or appropriate Supervising Pilot. These designation requests will include:

- a. Pilot's full name
- b. FAA Pilot Certificate Number
- c. Certificate ratings and limitations
- d. Date and class of last flight physical
- e. Date of last Flight Test, Biennial Flight Review or its equivalent, and
- f. The total number of hours flown during the preceding 12 months and preceding 90 days.

5.3 Suspension of Pilot Designation. Any change in pilot status resulting in ineligibility for NWS pilot designation will be promptly reported to the Chief/Supervising Pilot. NWS pilot designation will be suspended until eligibility is restored.

5.4 Flight Proficiency Requirements. Four (4) hours of flight time per month, averaged over a yearly period, is the minimum requirement for NWS designated pilots to maintain currency and flight proficiency. All designated pilots will report their number of hours flown for the preceding 12 months by October 1 each year to the Chief/Supervising Pilot. Although not required, it is highly recommended that NWS pilots participate in at least one pilot safety seminar each year.

In order to maintain designation eligibility, any pilot failing to complete 48 hours of flight time annually will present to the Chief/Supervising Pilot a copy of a logbook endorsement, obtained within the preceding 30 days, indicating one of the following:

- a. A successful proficiency check conducted by the FAA or an approved pilot check airman for a pilot certificate, rating, or operating privilege, or
- b. A flight review or its equivalent.

6. General Flight Operations Rules. All NWS flight operations will be conducted in accordance with Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations, part 91, pertaining to civil aircraft. The following rules apply to planning and execution of all NWS flights:

- a. The Chief/Supervisory Pilot should be notified of any proposed NWS flight operation.
- b. The Pilot-in-Command (PIC) is responsible for assuring airworthiness and suitability of any aircraft and equipment for the intended flight.
- c. Gross weight and center-of-gravity accounting for crew, passengers, fuel, oil, baggage, tools, or other equipment will be accurately computed before each flight to ensure the aircraft is within weight and balance limits for the planned flight.
- d. The PIC will ensure pertinent aeronautical charts in current and appropriate form are accessible for each flight.
- e. The PIC is responsible for obtaining and using weather information sufficient to plan and conduct a safe flight.
- f. The PIC has discretion to cancel, delay, or reroute flights whenever aircraft capabilities, qualifications and recent experience of pilot and crew, or conditions of the flight might compromise safety.
- g. Flights will not be conducted to or from locations which are, or are forecast to be, below IFR landing minimums or VFR weather minimums appropriate for the pilot and aircraft at the estimated time of arrival.
- h. All flights will be conducted with IFR fuel reserves.
- i. Flights conducted at the end of a workday or shift will require a two-pilot crew unless specifically exempted by the Chief/Supervising Pilot.
- j. Instrument flights planned to or from high density terminals, or at night, or expected to encounter more than two (2) hours of actual instrument conditions will require a two-pilot crew unless specifically exempted by the Chief/Supervising Pilot.
- k. Unless otherwise required by the rules governing operation of a particular aircraft or by the appropriate Chief/Supervising Pilot, the second pilot of a two-pilot crew need not be current, rated in the aircraft, or instrument rated. However, only NWS designated pilots will operate or act as flight crew aboard a privately owned, leased, or rented aircraft in support of NWS missions or programs.

- l. The PIC will brief any other flight crew on duty assignments and on emergency equipment and procedures prior to boarding. The PIC is responsible for ensuring flight conditions will permit proper crew coordination.
- m. All emergency and survival equipment required by FARs will be carried. Before departure, passengers will be briefed on the use of this equipment and on emergency procedures pertinent to the flight.

6.1 Mission Requests. When a request for designated pilot services is received the designated pilot will file a NOAA form 56-48, Request for Aircraft Support, to the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO), and to the Chief/Supervising Regional Supervising Pilot. The NOAA form 56-48 can be found on the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations web site. The designated pilot is required to complete parts 1, 3-9, and 12-14.

6.2 Mission Reports. When provisions of this instruction are used for a NWS program or mission, the designated pilot will file a NOAA form 56-56, Commercial Aviation Services Report, with OMAO and to the Chief/Supervising Pilot within 30 days of completed flight. The NOAA form 56-56 can be found on the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations web site. The designated pilot is required to complete all parts except 1 and 9.

6.3 Incident or Accident Reports. If any aircraft incidents or accidents occur during a NWS mission, the designated pilot or their office manager will notify the Chief/Supervising Pilot and RAM within 48 hours. If a written report is required in accordance with National Transportation Safety Board Part 830, Rules Pertaining to the Notification and Reporting of Aircraft Accidents or Incidents, a copy of this report will be sent to the Chief/Supervising Pilot.

7. Authorization Procedures. Authorization for designated pilots to act as pilot or crew on flights directly supporting their primary NWS duties, and any other authorizations for NWS personnel to perform their designated pilot duties, will be made through travel orders in accordance with the NOAA Travel Handbook. In addition to general authorization procedures, specific information regarding rental aircraft can be found within the Federal Travel Regulations, Chapter 301. Any questions regarding payment process and pertinent NOAA directives for travel conducted under this instruction should be addressed to the appropriate Regional Administrative Management Division or equivalent prior to any mission.

8. Transporting Non-U.S. Government Passenger(s). Authorization, in accordance with appropriate NOAA directives regarding the carriage of non-U.S. Government passengers, will be obtained prior to non-U.S. Government personnel boarding an aircraft operated under this instruction.